

THE THOMAS MILLER OF RECONSTRUCTION DAYS

Recollections of Days When Every-body Toted a Pistol—The Shot That Was Trained for Miller.

A. B. Williams in Roanoke Times.

Sometimes a single name or a small incident will open floodgates of recollections of those who have seen and felt things and bring to very vivid life old times and long arrays of dead men. We read in the South Carolina newspapers that T. E. Miller has been removed summarily by the new governor from his long held position as president of the colored university at Orangeburg.

This is "Canary Miller," quite an old man now and long ago reconciled to white rule and become a good man useful citizen. He was different 34 years ago when he sat in the South Carolina legislature as a representative from Beaufort—a short, square built man, seven-eighths white, wearing a heavy light gray sack suit, with his habit of running his hands into the pockets of his coat and fairly clear indication of a loaded revolver in each pocket. Other nasty habits had "Canary." He sat as a member of the last attempt at a Republican legislature in a Southern State in the last year of the Reconstruction era. He sat with "The Ring-Tailed Roarer of the Combahee," a black negro whose gullah dialect from the coast of Africa, whose immediate ancestry was so strong that a white man from the up-country barely could understand him when he addressed the house; also with the "Duke of Marlboro," an unctuous yellow scoundrel, representing the very garden spot of the State, who used to rise up and thunder from a broad chest and a wide throat when the house in chorus rendered: "Hold the Fort for Hayes and Wheeler." How it did reverberate, rendered to the air of "Hold the Fort, for I am Coming," when the South Carolina legislature refreshed itself with song.

In the Legislature.

"Canary" was not of the group collectively known as "The Forty Thieves," but he was about as full of fight and venom as a rattlesnake. One hundred and twenty-five was the legal membership of the house of representatives in the year of the mighty uprising of the white people under leadership of Wade Hampton, the outbursting and exploding of a fighting and desperate civilization against a 50,000 negro majority, the law and Ulysses S. Grant in the president's seat. The Democrats had elected 64—on the face of the returns. By means they kept two or three Republican representatives at their homes; but when their names were called they answered, "Dummies, ringers," had been put in to answer for them and no Democrat dared any knowledge that the realities were not there. Who could identify one lowland corn field negro from another? Then the Democrats, again by means, won over two or three. Tom Hamilton was among them. He must have been a descendant of a Zulu chieftain, because later, when his brethren clamored against him, he rose, tall and straight, his skin smooth and sleek as silk, and remarked that sometimes he went out in his field and killed a rice bird with a revolver for his sport; whereupon his brethren whimpered into silence because they knew it was so. Men, white, or black, who could drive a pistol bullet through a rice bird at eighteen steps were valuable at the moment and to be respected. But when the Democrats gained over recruits the Republicans—"Radicals" everybody called them then—simply went through the formality of declaring seats from some Democratic counties vacant and filed them with any body who might be handy, wearing any names that might fit, and so retained their legal majority, to be certified to Washington.

So it befell that on a December day the 65 Democrats and their colored allies, sitting in Carolina hall at Columbia, decided to go and occupy the hall of the house of representatives at the State house. They went trooping close behind Lawrence Orr, of Anderson county, six feet and four inches high and two hundred and sixty pounds in bulk, who threw his weight against closed doors and doorkeeper, and burst one and overthrew the other.

Sixty-five and sixty-five and with their quotas of sergeants-at-arms, clerks and attendants, the two houses sat in the hall three nights and the better part of three days. Gen. Wallace, S. C. A., of Union county, the Democratic speaker, and E. W. Mackey, of Charleston, the Radical speaker, sat side by side, each presiding over his own house and ignoring the other. United States soldiers guarded the doors. Their orders were not to exclude the Democrats, but if they went out not to allow them to return. The

sessions continued through all those hours of daylight and darkness, every man armed and ready with his nerves strung for the desperate fight all believed to be inevitable—a fight of men shut in, forced to fight until one side or the other was exterminated or somebody surrendered. Under each folder overcoat was a Winchester rifle, in some pocket of every man's clothes a loaded revolver.

Four reporters sat at the head of a table at the end of the aisle. They knew that right behind Speaker Mackey to his right two white men, chosen and approved killers, were stationed, instructed to shoot him dead at the first outbreak. Mackey knew it, too, but he clear game—that Mackey, Radical as he was; and he never moved or flinched or in any way departed from the strict formalities of his assumed office, and now and then his . . . laugh pealed through the house as something funny occurred. But the reporters knew that the moment trouble began a storm of bullets would come Mackey's way, because Mackey, as a white South Carolinian, of the entire outfit was most hated of South Carolinians, and the first thought of every man was to get "Mackey first." And many men in the excitement would shoot low.

A Shot for Miller.

Also many of the Radicals, especially among the "Forty Thieves," deadliest and bitterest and most courageous of all, had it in for the reporter's table. Therefore the reporters consulted among themselves as they smoked, who they would "get" before they were got. One of them had a pistol the like of which never was seen before or since that time, when the ingenuity and most of the thought of men were bent on devices for killing somebody. It was a section of a Remington rifle sawed off and fitted to a pistol stock, carrying a ball assigned especially to "Canary" Miller; it was placed in a drawer of the desk and trained on him pressed into the bottom of the drawer during the entire of the night, and kept cocked, the calculation being that when the fuss was opened the drawer would be pulled out, trigger cocked and "Canary" dropped as he rose in his place on the right-hand side toward the rear. If two or three men happened to be in the way it would be all the better. That cartridge was good for an elephant and all of our fellows were clear. All this was because "Canary" rose every fifteen minutes and conducted this colloquy: "Mr. Speaker!"

The Speaker: "The gentleman from Beaufort."

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order."

"The gentleman from Beaufort will state his point of order."

"Persons are on the floor of the house who are not members of the house."

"The point of order of the gentleman from Beaufort is well taken. The sergeant-at-arms will proceed to remove from the floor all members who are not members."

A Strenuous Time.

This was where the trouble was expected to occur. Orders were that when the Radical sergeant-at-arms put his hands on a Democrat or allied member the shooting would start. Every time he was ordered, the fool sergeant-at-arms would walk up the aisle toward somebody and nobody knew when with an extra click or two, or on some signal he actually would touch a man. It was trying on the nerves. An outbreak there would mean not only present slaughter, but civil war, because it had not been decided whether Hayes or Tilden was to be next president, and the nerves and temper of the country were at strained tension, ready to be startled to the fighting point by a less thing than wholesale butchery in the State house of one of the pivotal and disputed States.

By the special mercy of the Almighty the country was saved from that horror, as by the same gracious means it was saved from so many. The three nights and days the hundred and fifty odd armed and hating

men slept and ate and laughed, and taunted and threatened, and looked in the hall together, passed and the blow that would have such fearful consequences was not struck. "Canary" Miller did not get his fight or his bullet. Gen. Hampton got notice that the United States troops were to charge on his men and he moved them out, and next day his Red Shirts came in headlong and yelling on horseback, and on the dead run, and yelling afoot, and swarmed over the town by the thousands, and the worst strain of it was over. And "Canary" Miller, elderly, peaceful and fat, looms up again after all these years.

Mad Days and Merry Nights.

Mad days and bad days and merry nights these times, with a thrill for every hour and a danger for every step. News paper men did not have to look for news. They could crowd the wires with it until the wires could not take no more. This was before telephones, or typewriters or street cars. Men depended on their own legs and hands and eyes and ears and brains, and nobody thought of much food or sleep, or cared much for any live until spring or that by spring there would be any State of government.

And all the bright gay men who chronicled that time from day to day, who lived luxuriantly because with peril and excitement their nerves were strung happily and tense always, who joined in chorus and laughter to the rising of many wintry suns or new days of hard work and emergency, there is, so far as we know, but one left. When the drama was over they scattered to many parts of the world whence they came, and we think they are dead now, but one—and they were young men, too.

Here is thanks to "Canary" Miller for recalling a time, 34 years back, well worth living in.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, County of Newberry.

By Frank M. Schumpert, Esquire, Probate Judge.

WHEREAS, D. P. Bouknight made suit to me, to grant him Letters of Administration of the Estate of and effects of J. Alonzo Bouknight

THESE ARE THEREFORE to cite and admonish all and singular the kindred and Creditors of the said J. Alonzo Bouknight deceased, that they be and appear before me, in the court of Probate, to be held at Newberry, S. C., on the 15th day of June next after publication thereof, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, to show cause, if any they have, why the said Administration should not be granted.

GIVEN under my hand, this 27th day of May, Anno Domini, 1911.

F. M. Schumpert,
J. P. N. C.

CERTIFICATE RE-EXTENDING CHARTER.

Treasury Department, Office of Comptroller of the Currency., Washington, D. C., May 6, 1911.

Whereas, by satisfactory evidence presented to the undersigned, it has been made to appear that "The National Bank of Newberry," located in the town of Newberry, in the County of Newberry, and State of South Carolina, has complied with all the provisions of the act of congress "to enable National Banking Associations to extend their corporate existence, and for other purposes," approved July 12, 1882, as amended by the act approved April 12, 1902.

Now, therefore, I, Willis J. Fowler, Deputy and Acting Comptroller of the Currency, do hereby certify that "The National Bank of Newberry," located in the Town of Newberry, in the County of Newberry and State of South Carolina, is authorized to have succession for the period specified in its amended articles of association: namely, until close of business on May 6, 1931.

In testimony whereof witness my hand and Seal of office this (Seal) sixth day of May, 1911.

WILLIS J. FOWLER,
Deputy and Acting Comptroller of the Currency.
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Atlantic City, N. J., and return, \$22.45. Account meeting Grand Lodge B. P. O. E., July 10-15, 1911, tickets sold July 7, 8 and 9, 1911, good returning July 20. Extension until August 20, by depositing ticket and payment of fee of one dollar.

Atlantic City, N. J., and return, \$22.45. Account International Convention, United Society Christian Endeavor, July 6-12, 1911. Tickets sold July 3, 4, and 5, 1911, good returning July 19, 1911. Extension until August 15, by depositing ticket and payment fee of one dollar.

Rochester, N. Y., and return, \$27.55. Account meeting Ancient Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Imperial Council, July 11-13, 1911. Tickets sold July 7, 8 and 9, 1911, good returning July 18, 1911. Extension until August 15, 1911, by depositing tickets and payment of fee of one dollar.

Knoxville, Tenn., and return, \$8.35. Account Summer School of the South, June 20-July 28, 1911. Tickets sold June 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, July 1, 8, 9, and 15, 1911, only, good returning to reach original starting point fifteen days from, but not including, date of sale. Extension until September 30 by depositing ticket and payment of \$1.00 additional.

Kansas City, Mo., and return, \$43.90. Account Worlds Baraca-Philathea convention, June 10-15, 1911. Tickets on sale June 8 and 9, 1911, good returning June 18, 1911.

Charlottesville, Va., and return, \$11.35. Account University of Virginia Summer School, June 19-July 29, 1911. Tickets sold June 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26 and July 3 and 10, 1911, good returning fifteen days from, but not including, date of sale. Extension until September 30 by depositing ticket and payment of one dollar.

Sewanee, Tenn., and return, \$12.45. Account opening week, July 1-10, 1911, Monteagle Bible School, July 15-25, 1911; Monteagle Sunday School Institute, July 23-August 30, 1911. Tickets sold June 30-July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29-August 11, 12 and 18, 1911. Good returning September 5, 1911.

Meridian, Miss., and return, \$20.70. Account Sunday School congress of the National Baptist Convention (colored), June 7-12, 1911. Tickets sold June 5 and 6 and for trains scheduled to reach Meridian before noon June 7, 1911. Good returning June 14, 1911.

Asheville, N. C., and return, \$4.45. Account Summer Student Conference, Y. W. C. A., June 9-19, 1911. Tickets sold June 8 and 9, 1911, only, good returning June 28, 1911.

Black Mountain, N. C., and return, \$4.95. Account Summer Student Conference Y. M. C. A., June 16-25, 1911. Tickets sold June 15 and 16, 1911, only, good returning June 28, 1911.

Philadelphia, Pa., and return, \$20.55. Account the Northern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance Congress, June 13-25, 1911. Tickets sold June 9, 10, 12, 16 and 19, 1911, good returning June 29, 1911. Extension until July 31, 1911, by depositing ticket and payment of one dollar additional.

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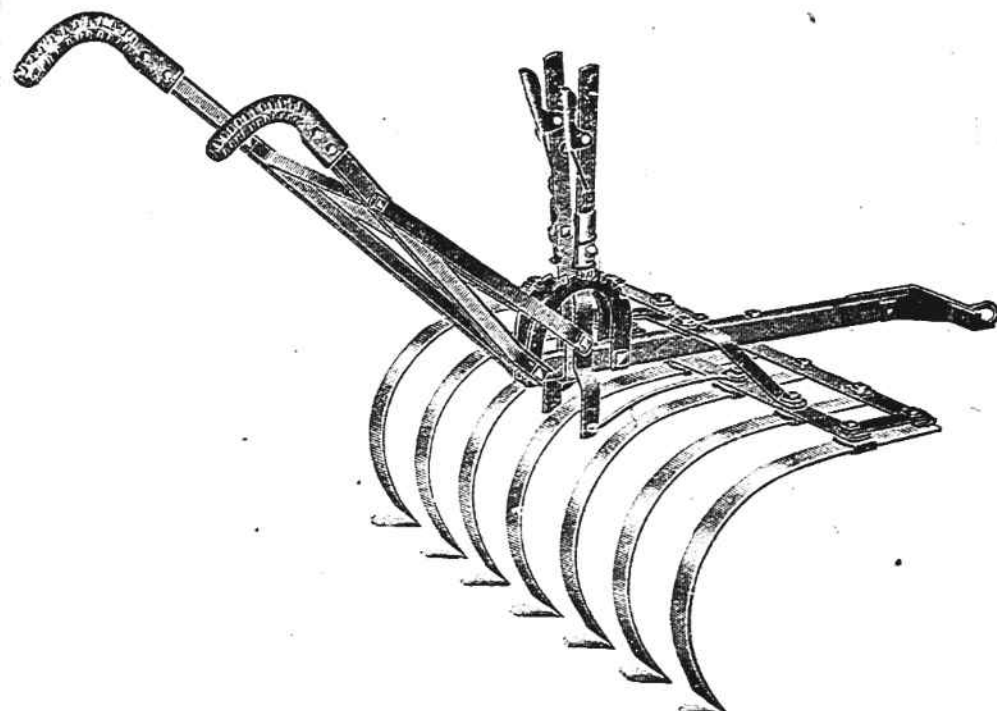
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